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REPORT

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U-238 CONTENT OF PITCHBLEND IN ORE MOUNTAINS
ESTIMATED AT 1,500 TONS

WAR PRISONERS WORK IN JACHYMOV MINE -- Zurich Die Tet, 24 Aug 50

The Czechoslovak-German Ore Mountains, which are in Soviet hands, contain pitchblende with an estimated U-238 content of 1,500 tons. The Jachymov uranium mine, along with the mines at Aue, Oberschlema, Sankt Georgenstadt, and Annaberg (in Sachsen), is the most important uranium mine in the triangle formed by Cheb, Usti, and Chemnitz.

Thus far the results of the drillings in Pribram, Ilmenau (Thuringen), and Wernigerode (Hartz Mountains) are not known.

The Jachymov mine is nominally run by a Czech superintendent, but the actual supervision of the mine is under Soviet mining engineers. At first the Soviets took over the Berdesvi /Bratrstvi?, Svornost, Rovnost, and Sibham /un-identified/ shafts, which were previously used for gold and silver mining. To the above they have added the 180-meter Elias shaft, which is still being expanded. The Berdesvi shaft, which is 550 meters deep, and the other shafts, which are 800 meters deep, cannot be deepened because of flooding. The roads between the five mines are altogether 14 kilometers long.

The shafts are driven into splintery rock which contains a few uranium veins, which are from 3 to 5 centimeters in diameter. The rock is blasted with dynamite; safety precautions in the mines are average. There is no modern machinery available for disposing of the blasted rock, which is merely loaded on manual dump cars and taken to the exits, some of which are 1,600 meters away. The methods used for separating the uranium pitchblende from ordinary rock are also very primitive, considering the urgent Soviet need for atomic bombs.

The rock is first examined with measuring devices, and, if it is radioactive, it is crushed with rock crushers. Then it is put on tables where it undergoes the floatation process. The monthly production of the Jachymov mines, when the writer was there, was 45 to 47 carloads of ore, which was sealed and sent to the USSR.

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After the Elias shaft reaches its full production capacity, it is hoped that the monthly output will be increased to 55 or even 60 carloads.

Until 1948, there was a great water shortage in the Jachymov mines, so that a water pipe had to be laid in 1948 and 1949 from Abertamy.

During the first postwar years, the Soviets used 4,700 German and Austrian prisoners of war and 500 Czech civil prisoners in the Jachymov mines.

In the fall of 1947, about 2,000 men were brought to the mine from L'vov and 1,200 from Stettin. In July 1948, an additional 1,500 men were brought from Riga. The Soviets assigned 250 prisoners of war and 50 ordinary prisoners per shift to each shaft. Ordinarily the three-shift system is used. The majority of the Stettin shipment was used for constructing the Elias shaft. From May until November 1949, the Wismut - AG in Plauen asked for five groups of prisoners of war for the new uranium mines in Annaberg. From here most of the prisoners of war escaped to the West. By the beginning of this year, 1,735 prisoners of war were left in Jachymov, but they were repatriated on 5 February through Frankfurt am Oder.

Upon Soviet request, the Czechoslovak government made available 4,000 of its political and criminal prisoners. Every underground worker receives 1,000 grams of black bread, 100 grams of meat, and 30 grams of margarine, daily. Surface workers receive 600 grams of black bread a day. For one kilogram of uranium ore, a worker receives 5 or 6 crowns in addition to the allotted food. The prisoners are heavily guarded by special Czech police detachments. Few escapes are attempted, and these as a rule are not successful. -- Dr Erich Mathis

DISCOVER URANIUM IN BOHEMIA -- Neue Zuercher Zeitung, 14 Sep 50

In addition to the dozens of new uranium mines which are being opened within the Karlovy Vary - Marianske Lazne - Jachymov triangle, uranium deposits have been found in Usti and Teplice-Sanov in northwestern Bohemia. Prospecting has taken place also in the Brdy Mountains near Pribram and Dobruška in central Bohemia. The prospecting is headed and controlled by Inspector Holubec.

In connection with the exploitation of uranium ore, new roads and railroads are being built and forced labor camps erected. All the available equipment and machines are being transported to the Jachymov area. Mining equipment which was originally slated for iron and coal mines is being rebuilt for the needs of the Jachymov uranium mines.

The Jachymov area was occupied by the Soviets in 1945 and no Czech officials had access to it or could obtain any information about it. All orders come straight from Moscow and are carried out by a Soviet executive committee. The present Soviet administration is being assisted by an exclusively Soviet technical staff. The security organs are subordinated to a special section of the MVD. The director of the Jachymov mine is the Soviet engineer, Dr Kazarchenko; the shafts are supervised by Engr Litvinov, and the chemical research works are headed by Dr Garbizin. The headquarters of the Soviet uranium mission in Jachymov is the Radium Palace Hotel, which was confiscated for this purpose. A Soviet research institute is also located in the hotel.

The largest uranium-ore vein runs beneath Plesivec Mountain along the Jachymov-Abertamy highway. Within a radius of 15 kilometers, there are seven important uranium mines: Bratrstvi with 1,000 forced laborers, Rovnost with 1,050, Elias with 600, Eva with 700, Svornost with 800, and Barbora with 300. These mines are surrounded by dozens of other mines which are either in

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the experimental stage or are already contributing considerably to the total production. The Jachymov mines border on an extended system of forced labor camps, the largest of which is the Vykmánov camp, with a capacity of 4,000 prisoners.

The Svornost mine is a typical combination of a mine and forced labor camp. It resembles a fortress rather than a mine. The mine is surrounded by a double barbed-wire fence and sentry towers equipped with machine guns and searchlights. The security organs also use dogs to guard the prisoners. The actual forced labor camp is located at the center of the mine area and is also surrounded by a barbed-wire fence. The shafts and the forced labor camp together constitute a miniature mining town with its own power plant, office buildings, laboratories, canteens, guardhouses, and barracks.

The barracks within the forced labor camp are unheated and are badly protected against rain. There is only one washbowl for 150 prisoners. The inmates are given a starvation diet, making the death rate high.

Political prisoners who are sentenced to forced labor and are selected for Jachymov are interned at the Bory Prison near Pilsen, where they are registered and then transported on trucks to the forced labor camps. Their daily program is as follows: reveille at 0445, morning shift at 0520, lunch at 1210, roll call at 1300, afternoon shift at 1400, afternoon roll call at 1700, evening meal at 1800, ideological training between 1800 and 2100, night shift at 2100, end of night shift at 2200, and lights out at 2300.

The following well-known persons are imprisoned at Jachymov: Prof Frantisek Loubal, former chairman of the Moravian National Assembly; his brother, Dr Gustav Loubal; Dr Stanislav Novotny, representative of a Catholic party; Dr Toul, professor of the Theological School of Olomouc University; and the radio announcers Stefan Maslonka and Zdenek Mancal. In addition to the above, high army officers, university professors, priests, and unknown members of the underground are also interned here. Illegal anti-Communist groups are forming at the labor camps themselves. These groups have succeeded several times in helping threatened prisoners to escape to the US zone of Germany.

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